Lift up

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Of Mines and Men — the Story of Keetley

Few pursuits in life have had more influence on men than mining. Civilization itself prospered as men learned to take metal ores from the earth and fashion the substances into useful tools. Precious minerals and valuable ores have caused great cities and small towns to rise and fall with mining's fortunes and tides. Many men have given their lives as they struggled to take nature's treasures from deep within the earth. Mining, too, has usually written the character references of those who pursued it, as some have been motivated by a sincere desire to find things they could share and others have searched only for themselves and their greed.

Wasatch County has been vitally concerned with mines and miners, as has already been explained in earlier chapters. Vigorous mining progress in the Park City area had a great impact on commerce and industry in Wasatch towns, and much of the county's colorful history centers around the men of the mines.

The county's northern-most settlement, the town of Keetley, owes its existence to mining activity. It was the last community in the county to be organized, and for several decades was known and identified only as a mining shaft. Its location was first plotted in 1887 when leaders of the Park City Mining District chose a point of elevation for the portal of a drainage tunnel from the properties of the Daly Mining Company and the Ontario Silver Mining Company.

The Ontario-Daly No. 2 Drain Tunnel, as the project became known, was a tremendous undertaking for the time. It was to be more than 15,000 feet in length, cost nearly half a million dollars and take six years to complete. By 1898 the tunnel had been extended from the present site of Keetley into the Daly West Mining Company ground, a total of over 20,500 feet and had cost well over $670,000.

The man chosen to supervise the work on the tunnel was one of the west's most picturesque mining characters, John B. "Jack" Keetley, as well known for his Pony Express riding as for his mining prowess. He reportedly purchased the famous Last Chance property at Bingham from the original locator for a horse and saddle, and paid for building a cabin on the claim with a six shooter. After working the property for a year, Mr. Keetley sold it for $17,000. The claim has since yielded millions of dollars worth of ore.

A generous man, Mr. Keetley was particularly fond of youngsters. Many residents of Wasatch County today who were youngsters during

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was later incorporated with other holdings to form the "Star of Utah," which in turn became the New Park Mine.

The first major effort to produce ore in Wasatch County was the McCune Tunnel. This was driven into the mountains west of Keetley before the turn of the century, but to no avail. About the same time the McHenry Shaft was sunk in the same area, but the unfortunate prospectors, it was later discovered, missed a vast vein of ore by only 18 feet.

Another mining adventure, The St. Louis-Ontario, was conducted directly above the spot where the portal of the drain tunnel was later placed. This project also failed, perhaps because it was focused too high on the Blue Ledge slope.

In spite of these failures, the lure of gold and other precious metals enchanted many and prospecting continued. In the early 1900's the East Utah shaft was sunk, and modest fortunes sank with it. In 1905 the Columbus Tract on Bonanza Flat was worked until lack of capital ended the venture.

Further down the slope in the Glen Allen, sometimes known as the "Glencoe" excavation, hundreds of thousands of dollars were invested in determined efforts to locate pay dirt. A refining mill was constructed on the property through which discovered ore was reduced to concentrate. In 1907 John Fisher and Gail Fisher took a contract to transport this refined ore from the mill to the Denver and Rio Grande Depot in Heber City, a distance of about 12 miles. However, the Allen fortune was spent before the coveted silver vein was located.

The project "Vallejo" lay further south in the mountains west of Jordanelle, and was worked intermittently for several years, even though a heavy percentage of iron in the ore made transportation a serious problem.

William Trevithick and John Fisher leased the Vallejo property and supplied work for many Wasatch County miners and teamsters until this venture too ended in disaster. George McDonald, one of the teamsters, was headed toward Heber City with a wagon load of ore and when he drove onto the Provo River bridge northwest of the present Heber Light and Power plant, the bridge buckled, sending him and half his wagon one way and the team and the rest of the wagon and ore the other way. Mr. McDonald escaped alive, but the wagon and team were lost, and the bridge was gone. Because the ore from Vallejo could not command sufficient price to warrant construction of a new bridge and better road, the project failed.

Another persistent attempt at prospecting for ore in northern Wasatch County was the Nelson-Green, which was located in rolling hills some two miles east of Lee's Ranch. After several years of effort, the Nelson Brothers of Park City sold the property to Daniel Knold, who renamed it the Park Knold, and continued to work his claim with some profit.

The major mining development in the Keetley area began about 1921 when the Park Utah Mining Company was formed. The company con-

Oscar N. Friendly, prominent mining executive who was largely responsible for pin-pointing the underground wealth.

ducted systematic development work by which one of the richest ore bodies in Wasatch County was discovered. During the 1920's alone this company paid nearly three million dollars worth of dividends.

One of the persons largely responsible for pin-pointing this wealth near Keetley was Oscar N. Friendly, a native of Oregon who studied mining engineering at the University of California at Berkeley. During his summer vacation periods he worked at the old Highland Boy mine in Salt Lake's Bingham District, and also at the Daly West mine in Park City. His first full time job after graduation in 1907 was an engineer-surveyor for the Daly West property. In 1909 he became engineer and geologist for the Daly Judge Mining Co., the firm which later was the nucleus of the Park Utah Mining Company.

George W. Lambourne, head of the Daly Judge firm asked Mr. Friendly to work on classification of rock formations in the Keetley area, and it was through this work that Mr. Friendly found there was more than one occurrence of ore in the area. His development work disclosed ore bodies extending through much of the region.

Another major developer of the area was Paul H. Hunt, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, and a California schoolmate of Mr. Friendly. He served as general manager of the Park Utah Mining Company, and then in 1925 when the Judge, Daly West, Park Utah, Ontario and other properties were merged to form the Park Utah Consolidated Mining Co., Mr. Hunt was named manager and Mr. Friendly assistant general manager.

In addition to his leadership in mining, Mr. Hunt was also a member of the Wasatch County Commission and served in both houses of the Utah Legislature. He was also founder and president of the Associated Civic Clubs of Northern Utah. He retired from mining in 1955 and died in California on April 17, 1958.

As the Park Utah Mining Company was doing its development work in the 1920's in the Blue Ledge area, those owning claims on the

Paul H. Hunt, general manager of the mines at Keetley for many years, and prominent in Wasatch County civic and political circles.

south side of McHenry Canyon made concentrated efforts to reach hidden treasures they all felt lay in the mountain ranges.

One group of claimants organized the Star of Utah under the direction of Charles (Charlie) Moore and John Fisher. Several Wasatch County men participated in this mining work. By 1930 the prospects showed ore rich enough to make financial success possible, and then the great depression of the 1930's struck the area and the work was slowed down.

Jack Keeler, a bachelor whose eyesight was so poor he could scarcely

Harry R. Wallace, early superintendent of the Park Utah Consolidated Mines.

detect daylight from darkness, spent his lifetime in the area digging a tunnel which later proved to be headed directly for rich ore. However, old age and infirmity forced him to yield before he struck "pay dirt." He sold his claim to the Mayflower Corp., which was working from a different portal along with the Star of Utah group. Enough ore was transported by truck to Heber City from this portal that an extension spur of the Union Pacific Railroad was built to the property in 1941.

The Star of Utah and the Mayflower tunnel developments were eventually merged to form the New Park Mine, whose stock sold briskly on the New York Stock Exchange for several years.

This lead and zinc mining firm was a weird legal tangle when William Henry Harrison Cranmer took over as its president in 1934. The property was mortgaged, titles to its lands were clouded and there was a debt of some $100,000. Mr. Cranmer borrowed money to clear liens against the title, sold small pieces of land to neighboring mining companies and struggled in many ways to secure sufficient capital to maintain operations.

Under Mr. Cranmer's leadership the New Park Mining Company has increased its property holdings from 1,100 acres to more than 10,000 acres. The Mayflower Mine has been modernized and a Mayflower Tunnel completed.

In recent years a depressed lead and zinc market has caused Mr. Cranmer to diversify New Park's holdings to overcome a slump in the company's mining operations. Now more of a holding company than an operating concern, New Park activity has embraced exploration in phosphate, potash, copper, gold, building stone, oil and uranium. Mr. Cranmer is also exploring and developing mineral lands in Wasatch County's Snake Creek Mining District.

New Park maintains its operating office at Keetley and its executive office in Salt Lake City. Gale A. Hansen is superintendent of mines at Keetley, with offices in the community's former school building.

The growth of Keetley as a community came largely as a result of the success of the Park Utah mine in the 1920's. The Ontario-Daly No. 2 Drain Tunnel had operated in the area since the late 1890's, but had never caused much community development. The tunnel, still operated by its owners, the United Park City Mines Company, was a dual blessing when it was completed. In addition to ridding the Ontario and Daly mines of excess water, it was a boon to farmers in the low-lands. Orson Hicken, David Hicken, Fred Hicken and others dug a canal to carry the waters down to the meadows.

Even before Keetley's mining boom, Mr. and Mrs. Gail Fisher lived in the area in a rambling farm house on the Fisher Ranch. When the Union Pacific Railroad came to the Keetley area in 1923 the community's future seemed secure, and Charles Roy Lenzi of Park City was hired to paint the houses and mine buildings that had been constructed around the Ontario-Daly tunnel. When the painting was completed, Mr. Lenzi

decided to settle in the new area. He brought his family from Park City and settled in one of the nine houses along the ridge of the hill east of the mine building. Other homes were occupied by Archie Henderson, Will O'Brien, William Luke, Roy Pettie, Paul Hunt, William Fife, Ralph Stringham and George D. Blood. Later a house was built on the side of the road going down the ridge. Frank Hyde and later Harry Wallace, superintendent of the Park Utah Consolidated Mines, lived in this home. Another five families built homes in the canyon back of the mine building. These were Charles Welch, Al Ross, E. A. Hewitt, Robert Hyde and William Haueter. Mine buildings included an office, shops, boiler room, boarding house, commissary and two bunk houses. Later, two more bunk houses were built to accommodate the 500 to 600 men who came to the area in its boom days.

George A. Fisher, who did much of the land development in the area, supervised most of Keetley's growth. He built five modern homes, a combination store and gas station, and later an apartment house. He served as mayor of Keetley from the 1920's until his death in July, 1954. As mayor he directed the erection of an imposing school building.

Mr. Fisher, as mentioned earlier, also named the community in honor of Jack Keetley. This name created an interesting condition when postal service was inaugurated in the summer of 1923. Charles Roy Lenzi was named as postmaster and the service was very well received in the community. However, George Blood, acting superintendent of mines, discovered in the official community records that the town's name had been incorrectly recorded as "Keatley." A sign had even been placed over the post office with this incorrect spelling.

When the error was brought to the attention of the Postmaster General in Washington, he had to cancel the appointment of Charles Lenzi as postmaster, then recorded the name correctly and reappointed Mr. Lenzi as postmaster. This was done in November, 1923. Mr. Lenzi served continuously as Keetley's postmaster until 1952 when he retired and the post office was discontinued.

Charles Roy Lenzi, postmaster of Keetley from 1923 to 1952,

and Lettie Lenzi, his wife and assistant postmaster.

One of the most grueling tasks connected with mining in Keetley was hauling ore to Heber City before the railroad came to the area. Loads were weighed in at John A. Fortie's weighing station, and then the teamsters drove the distance to Heber's railroad depot. Some of the teamsters who shared the difficult assignment were James Provost, William Provost, William D. Murray, Bert Murray, John (Jack) Casper, Tom Harper, Craig Fisher, Ewing Peterson, Henry Clegg, John Noakes, Frank Hicken, George Giles, Hyrum Winterton, Theodore Jasperson, Moroni Casper, Ray Davis, Leland Wootton, Addison O. Moulton, Henry Baird, Alwin Baird, John (Jack) Turner, Tom Rasband, Don Rasband, Arthur Moulton, Ernest Hicken, David Murdock, Clifford McDonald, Otto McDonald, and William Holmes.

Depressed mining conditions in recent years have resulted in a slowing down at Keetley. Many families have moved away, but the community is far from a "ghost town." Those who have remained carry on an active life in working at the mines, engaging in farming and operating the motel and other businesses along much traveled U.S. Highway 40.

The intrigue of prospecting for gold and other precious metals will probably keep Keetley alive forever. The fortunes that have been lost in fruitless shafts and barren tracts will never discourage some from believing that there are still new fortunes to be made.

Typical of this is the case of "Pete" Johnson, who prospected for years in Dutch Canyon. About 1923 he proposed to some fellow miners at the Park Utah that they join together in a prospecting venture. Roy Lenzi, George Olson, Lee Johnson, Charles Smith and Bert Lindsay agreed to grub-stake "Pete" in his efforts to find ore.

For more than a quarter of a century the claimants referred to their claim as the "Lost Capital of Poverty Gulch." However, in recent years "Pete" passed away, and when his estate was settled the claim was sold to the New Park Mining Company, and each of the participants received at least double their original investment.

With many others, they still believe that gold lies concealed in "them thar hills!"

Chapter Thirty-three

The "Other Faces" of Wasatch

Any area that reaches the century mark in its growth stands as another witness to the most common phenomenon of life—change. Wasatch County is no exception. Prosperous Provo Valley has flourished as men have changed the landscape and introduced improved, new ways of living.

Some areas of Wasatch County have changed more than others. The "boom and bust" area of Soldiers Summit was once a flourishing community and now is a ghost town. Hailstone or Elkhorn was the scene of a prosperous lumbering operation and now is little more than a widened highway. Developments were begun in both Provo Canyon and Daniels Canyon, and these, too, have given way to new highway projects. Still another changing area in the extreme north east part of the county is Strawberry Reservoir, a delightful resort and fishing spot, now undergoing a transition through conservation and wildlife practices.

SOLDIERS SUMMIT

Tragedy, a railroad boom and now near oblivion are the brief steps of history in Soldiers Summit, one of the few communities in Wasatch County that lies outside Provo Valley.

The ghost town of today had its beginning about 1862 in the midst of tragedy. Soldiers from Johnston's Army that had been stationed at Camp Floyd were recalled to aid in the Civil War. Desiring to return to the East as quickly as possible many of the soldiers started up Spanish Fork Canyon along the pass between the Colorado Basin and the Great Basin. Caught in a blizzard common to the high mountain country, they died from exposure. The bodies were buried near the pass at a spot which became known as "Soldiers Summit" in their honor.

Years later as railroads began operating in the state the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad found it advantageous to establish a traffic control point at the summit. Extra locomotives were needed to pull the trains over the pass, and the crews that operated these engines were based at Soldiers Summit. A round-house was built there to be used in turning the locomotives around, and the area began to flourish.

In 1919 a real estate firm headed by H. C. Means began to promote the area in a development program. The government, which at that time was operating the railroads, threw its support behind the development and the boom was on.

Soldiers Summit was incorporated as a city in 1921 by H. O. Means,